

2
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NORFOLK, VA., SEEN AS SPYING TARGET

Sensitive Naval Complex Seen
as a Key Place for Foreign
Recruiting of Agents

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NORFOLK, Va., June 1 — Current and former Federal intelligence agents say the Tidewater area, home to the world's largest and perhaps most sensitive naval complex, is a prime center of spy-recruiting efforts by foreign powers.

Maintaining security is, by all accounts, a constant burden, rooted in the belief that almost anyone here among the 300,000 uniformed and civilian Navy employees may be approached by an agent from the Soviet bloc.

The campaign of security awareness is conducted through posters, slogans printed on paychecks, training films shown behind guarded gates and requirements for drawn window curtains when the most highly classified materials are opened, even on high floors. Combination locks secure rooms containing the most secret data.

"It really goes against the traditional, friendly American paranoia about being paranoid," said one retired counterintelligence official.

Few Breaches Made Public

How frequently the system fails is unknown. Federal investigators have said the security efforts would be intensified because of the recent arrests of two Navy brothers from Norfolk, former Chief Warrant Officer John A. Walker Jr., 47 years old, and Arthur J. Walker, 50, a retired lieutenant commander, and John Walker's son, Michael, 22, a seaman on the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Nimitz in the Mediterranean. The Nimitz's home port is Norfolk.

The Walker case is one of very few purported security breaches in this area ever made public by actual arrests; there has been only one known Federal prosecution here for espionage since World War II, in the case of a sailor who sent a letter to the Soviet Embassy offering to sell documents. The letter was intercepted.

But other security breaches, actual or potential, have been handled short of public charges by dismissals of suspected American participants and the unpublicized recall of Soviet or Eastern bloc agents, officials said.

Several officials of the Federal Bu-

reau of Investigation said the bureau had acquired useful double agents from among the Russians' ostensibly "successful" American recruits.

'Important Intelligence Target'

Only the Pentagon has higher priority for foreign espionage than the Hampton Roads area, according to Herbert D. Clough Jr., a retired, 29-year veteran of F.B.I. counterintelligence assignments who was the bureau's agent-in-charge here from 1975 to 1978 and then headed its Los Angeles office.

"In Silicon Valley, elsewhere in California, and in Boston and northern New Jersey you have concentrations of defense research and development work," he said in a telephone interview. "In Norfolk, there is the opportunity to look into actual applied weaponry, proven to be useful and effective." Mr. Clough is now a vice president of a security consulting concern in Los Angeles.

Phillip A. Parker, deputy director of the F.B.I. intelligence division in Washington, a native of Chesapeake, a Norfolk suburb, was quoted here recently as saying, "From a military point of view, Hampton Roads is the

most important intelligence target on the East Coast."

The Tidewater area, the estuary of the Chesapeake Bay and the James River, has 10 military bases and some 300 private companies with some level of security clearance to perform military consulting and contracting. It is home port to 108 ships of the United States Atlantic fleet, including six of the Navy's 14 aircraft carriers, and hundreds of Navy and Air Force aircraft.

Travel Restrictions in Force

North across the bay, nuclear-powered carriers and submarines are made at the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company. Beyond the shipyard are Langley Air Force Base, the headquarters of the Tactical Air Command; the secret wind tunnel facilities of the National Aeronautical and Space Administration, and, at Fort Monroe, the headquarters of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command.

In nearby York County is Camp Peary, a major training facility of the Central Intelligence Agency.

"Eastern bloc people do not come here for the 'kreb keks,'" or crab cakes, said an agent who asked not to be identified.

Soviet citizens and diplomats are barred from visiting the Tidewater area, though the State Department does allow visits to nearby Williamsburg. But no travel restrictions apply to people from the Communist nations the F.B.I. calls "the Little Brothers" — Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Rumania and East Germany.

Mr. Clough said the bureau's allegation that John Walker, a private detective here since 1978, when he retired after 21 years in the Navy, had been selling Navy secrets to the Russians for 15 to 18 years "indicates to me that he was an extremely valuable asset to them over a long time, and was probably very closely held by the Russians to keep him from being discovered by the 'Little Brothers.'"

"I would say the Russians considered him a very high-level recruitment," Mr. Clough said. John Walker could have "a volunteer for money" or could have been recruited by Soviet agents, Mr. Clough said. "Recruitment is basically a seduction process," he said.

Mr. Clough said he regarded the Walker case as unusual "to the point of bizarre because so many people are involved in it."